

Fort Sam Houston National Historic Landmark
Military Post of San Antonio Administration Building
(Building #616, Infantry Post)
San Antonio
Bexar County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3303-8

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Architectural and Engineering Record
National Parks Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
FORT SAM HOUSTON NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

MILITARY POST OF SAN ANTONIO ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
(Building #616, Infantry Post)

HABS No. TX-3303-8

Location: 616 Infantry Post Road, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas.

Present Owner
and Occupant: U. S. Army

Present Use: Bachelor Officers Quarters

Significance: Building #616, completed in 1886, was the first permanent administration building for the Military Post of San Antonio (officially named Fort Sam Houston in 1890). Part of a complex of buildings that included barracks and additional officers housing built between 1886 and 1893, this "New Government Post", now commonly known as Infantry Post, firmly established San Antonio as a military post rather than merely a supply depot.

Simple in its design, the building's appearance has remained virtually unchanged since its construction. Since the 1820's, it has been used for officer's housing.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of Erection: 1886
2. Architect: Unknown; an article appearing in the San Antonio Express, 15 September 1885, reports: "The entire planning of the new barracks and quarters was designed by Col. J.G.C. Lee and the working out of designs was done under Col. Lee's direction by Messrs. Alfred Giles, Architect, and C.H. Millington, Civil Engineer.
3. Original and Subsequent Owners: U.S. Army from date of construction until the present.
4. Builder/Contractor: W.S. Pleasants.
5. Original Plan and Construction: This building is a two-story yellow brick structure with a symmetrical plan. A prominent two-tier porch is attached on the front and sides. The roof is a shallow hipped one with standing-seam metal covering. All windows are nine feet high, with double-hung sash. The windows

continue to the floor, providing access to the porch. The interior floor plan was probably originally a center-hall, double-pile one. The building was constructed at a cost of \$5736.

6. Alterations and Additions: The exterior of the house has had no major modifications. The porch has been entirely rebuilt, but follows closely the original design.

The interior floor plan was modified in 1919 for duplex apartments. In 1941 the house was converted to four smaller two-room apartments with full baths. A narrow two-story frame washerboard siding bathroom addition is in the rear.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: This brick building with a symmetrical, five-bay center-hall plan has remained virtually unchanged in its original appearance. Windows with rock face limestone lintels, are nine feet high, continuing to the floor. A dominant two-tier porch, rebuilt yet replicating its original form, runs across the south front and along the east and west sides.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall Dimensions: This building is two stories, five bays by four bays with a symmetrical, rectangular plan. A small two-story frame addition is in the center rear.
2. Foundations: The foundations are rock and concrete foundation walls with no basement; a two-inch water table projection is visible in the rear. The porch rests on stone piers.
3. Wall Construction, Finish and Color: There are yellow brick exterior walls in all-stretcher bond with raked mortar joints. A small frame rear addition is covered with white painted washerboard siding.
4. Structural System and Framing: The walls are brick load-bearing walls are in all-stretcher bond. There is also a narrow two-story frame rear addition.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies and bulkheads: A two-tier attached porch wraps around the front and sides of structure four steps above grade. Boxed chamfered posts set on simple square base with cornice molding and solid, carved wood bracket supports above on the first and second floors. (Brackets on the second level are slightly smaller than those on the first). An open work balustrade with molded rail encloses the second level. The porch flooring is painted tongue-and-groove wood on both levels. The base is enclosed with vertical lattice between the piers.
6. Chimneys: Four corbelled red brick interior chimneys are symmetrically set, two along the east side wall and two along the west side wall.

Two air vents project from hipped roof on the east and west sides of the ridge line between flanking chimneys.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and Doors: The center door is a wood double-door entrance with three panels with original hardware and etched frosted glass transom above. There are three-panel, double screen doors on outside.
- b. Windows: The windows off the porch are 9' long, four-by-four sash, screened windows that continue to the floor providing access to the porch on the first and second levels.

All windows on the front and sides have rough stone flat "lug" lintels above and painted wood block sills.

The rear windows are approximately 8' with stone lintels and sills.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, Covering: The roof is a shallow hipped roof with standing-seam metal covering.
- b. Cornice, Eaves: The cornice projects approximately two feet with a slightly molded edge supported by triangular truss brackets most clearly visible from the rear. The cornice on the front and side is obscured by an attached two-tier porch.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans:

- a. First Floor: The building now serves as bachelor's quarters with four individual two-room units, each with a full bath. The building has a center-hall plan with two rooms on either side in double-pile form. This plan has been modified to accommodate two center rear baths. One is housed in the rear frame addition.
 - b. Second Floor: The second floor is identical to the first with a center-hall plan with flanking rooms on either side in double-pile form. One bath is in the rear frame addition, the other is in the enclosed front center hall, accessible from the southeast room.
2. Stairways: There is a semi-enclosed, straight-run staircase along the west wall of the central hall. The stair has a massive, rectangular block, newel post with chamfered corners and decorative notchwork. Heavy balusters, running along the east edge of stairs continuing up to the second floor and around stairwell, also have chamfered edges and a wide molded handrail. Vertical beaded board wainscotting runs along the side hall walls with a finishing molded stairrail and continues along the side stairway up to the second floor.
 3. Flooring: The floors, originally solid oak flooring, were covered with carpeting in 1978 and one inch square tiles are in the bath.
 4. Wall and Ceiling Finish: All original plaster throughout has been sheetrocked with the exception of the hallway; the baths have square tiles on the lower half of the walls.
 5. Doorways and Doors: Many interior doors have been changed from the original yet the decorative woodwork trim remains.

The apartment entry doors off the first-floor center hall,, possibly cased openings originally, now have standard hollow-core doors. The second floor has retained its four-panel doors off the center hall. These second-floor doors have two-pane operable transom lights above.

Two long bedroom closets have simple double sliding doors. All other doors are standard four panel doors.

6. Special Decorative Features:

- a. Woodwork: The doorway and window trim is unusual. The woodwork is fluted with decoratively carved corner and base blocks (some have plain corner blocks). The windows are inset.
- b. Fireplaces: Four fireplaces remain on the first floor with simple woodframe mantels with carved bracket supports varying slightly in each fireplace. The rectangular opening is surrounded by etched design in a slate or metal material. Space heaters now sit in each of the fireplace openings. (La Clede Brick, St. Louis was used in the fireplace)

7. Mechanical Equipment:

- a. Heating: The first-floor apartments have space heaters in each fireplace. The second-floor fireplaces have been blocked up and wall furnaces have been installed.
- b. Lighting: There are incandescent ceiling fixtures throughout.

D. Site:

The original Administration building faces south at the west entry gate to the Infantry Post on the extension of Grayson Street. The building is on a small corner lot with a brick structure immediately to the west.

There is no notable landscaping or outbuildings.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Old Views:

Views of Fort Sam Houston, Record Group 92F-56, Audio-Visual Archives, National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C.

Fort Sam Houston Historical Museum, Building #123, Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas.

B. Bibliography:

1. Primary and Unpublished Sources:

Buerkle, Ruth. "Infantry Post at Fort Sam Houston, Texas": Location, Description, History of Buildings Recommended for Inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, July, 1974. Unpublished report.

Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, Consolidated Correspondence File 1794-1915, microfilm reel from the National Archives, Washington, D.C. (held at the Fort Sam Houston Post Library).

Real Property Records, Directorate of Facilities Engineering, Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas.

2. Secondary and Published Sources:

Handy, Mary Olivia. A History of Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Naylor, Inc., 1951.

C. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

Correspondence and other Miscellaneous Files relating to Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas, National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The detailed survey of eighteen (18) architecturally representative structures, and a group of streetscapes, at Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas, was undertaken in 1980 by the National Architectural and Engineering Record (NAER) after a comprehensive inventory of the Post was conducted. Funding for the project was made possible through the cooperative efforts of the Department of the Army, Fort Sam Houston, and the San Antonio Conservation Society.

This project was under the general supervision of Kenneth Anderson, Acting Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey of the National Architectural and Engineering Record. Sally Tompkins of the NAER staff was project supervisor. Project Historian was Kathryn A. Burns, San Antonio, Texas. Photographic records were provided by David Kaminsky, Roswell, New Mexico.

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(Fort Sam Houston, Building No. 616)

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ADDENDUM TO

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